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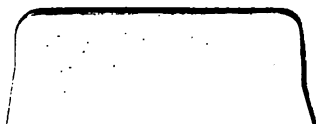
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FASTING RECEPTION  
OF THE  
BLESSED SACRAMENT





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FASTING RECEPTION  
OF THE  
BLESSED SACRAMENT

A Custom of the Church Catholic

BY

*FREDERICK HALL, M.A.*

AN ASSISTANT-CURATE OF S. AUGUSTINE  
KILBURN

“τὰ ἀρχαῖα ἔθνη κρατεῖτω”

NIC. CAN. 6

SECOND EDITION, SOMEWHAT ENLARGED



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**Inscribed**

TO

**THE HON. CHARLES L. WOOD,**

PRESIDENT OF

***The English Church Union :***

A SOCIETY

“FORMED FOR THE PURPOSE OF

UNITING CLERGY AND LAITY IN LOYAL DEFENCE OF

THE DOCTRINE AND DISCIPLINE OF

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND,

AND OF THE RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES OF HER

FAITHFUL CHILDREN”:

***AN EXPRESSION***

OF MUCH GRATITUDE AND GREAT RESPECT

FROM ONE OF

***Twenty Thousand Members, Communicants***



## Fasting Reception

OF THE

## BLESSED SACRAMENT

I BASE the practice of early and Fasting Communion on Catholic custom: and custom is unwritten human law.

How considerable is the importance which we attach to *custom* in matters of every-day life! What, for instance, would be thought of a man who persisted in attending the funeral of one very dear to him—his mother, his wife, or his child, bedecked in the brightest-coloured clothes on which he could lay hands? And what said if, in reply to all remonstrances, he urged, “No one’s grief under such circumstances could possibly be greater than my own; nothing can surpass the love that I bore the departed in her lifetime, and the respect that I entertain for her memory now; but I cannot submit to a custom which seems to me so exceedingly foolish as wearing black clothes in time of sorrow, as though, forsooth, the intensity of my grief were to be

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gauged by the depth of my mourning"? His friends would naturally ask him to consider the feelings of others as well as his own, the pain that he would cause by his apparent slight to the deceased, and the occasion which he would give for others to question the reality of his grief, if he acted in a way so contrary to the custom of the country in which he lived. The fact is, no one can disregard the appeal to custom; no one who is not very wilful and insensible to the feelings of others does.

S. Basil, writing in the fourth century on marriage with a deceased wife's sister, says, "Our custom in this matter has the force of law, because the statutes we observe have been handed down to us by holy men."<sup>1</sup>

Tertullian says, in reference to certain practices of the Church, "For these and such like rules, if thou requirest a law in the Scriptures thou shalt find none. Tradition will be pleaded to thee as originating them, custom as confirming them, and faith as observing them."<sup>2</sup>

One custom of the Catholic Church—*mos pro lege*—though sadly forgotten in recent days, has been the fasting reception of the Blessed Sacrament: a practice which has been adopted as a special sign of reverence, a mark of our sense of the "great dignity of that Holy Mystery."

It was after the Paschal Supper indeed, and in the

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Bishop of Lincoln on Lev. xviii. 18.

<sup>2</sup> *De Cor.* iv.

evening, that the Holy Eucharist was instituted by our Lord : but without any command with which we have been charged, that the details on Maundy Thursday were to be considered an exact pattern for all future Celebrations ; otherwise, It could *only* be celebrated in the evening, in a room, in ordinary dress, with common vessels, after supper, by men reclining on couches round a table. S. Gregory Nazianzen, in a sermon preached at Constantinople (January, A.D. 381), said : " Every action of Christ is not necessary to be imitated by us, for He celebrated the mystery of the Passion with His disciples in an upper room, and after supper ; but we do it in the church, and before supper."<sup>1</sup> This distinction Canon Bright recognises when he says, " In contemplating our Lord's life, the early Church saw plainly that while in some respects His actions were to be imitated closely, literally, and for ever ; in others they were peculiar to, and a part of, His redemptive and incommunicable relation to the human race."<sup>2</sup>

Probably with the desire closely to conform to the pattern of the first celebration of the Holy Eucharist by our Lord Himself, the Christians of the very earliest age joined with the Holy Communion a meal called the Agape, or Feast of Charity. (S. Jude 12.) According to Mr. Conybeare and Dean Howson,<sup>3</sup> the Agape originally preceded the Holy Eucharist, subsequently followed It, and finally was totally separated from It. But this

<sup>1</sup> *Orat. 40 de Bapt.*, quoted in BINGHAM'S *Antiquities*, xv. vii. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Evening Communions*, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Life of S. Paul*, c. xiii.

association led, as S. Paul tells us, to most unhappy results; for at the Agape the rich feasted to repletion, while the poor were famished; each desired to take before other his own supper; an unseemly contention prevailed; one was hungry, and another was drunken. (1 Cor. xi. 21.)

The immediate result of the consequent desecration of the Holy Eucharist by those who failed to discern the Lord's Body (1 Cor. xi. 29) was, that the members of the Church at Corinth were severely punished by God with sickness and even with death: "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." (1 Cor. xi. 30.)

And S. Paul, while reproving generally the irreverence referred to, and justifying the Divine judgment, intimates his intention of dealing more particularly with the evil at some future time: "The rest will I set in order when I come." S. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo (395-430 A.D.), in his letter to Januarius, quoted below, says that the practice of Fasting Communion was an outcome of the regulations then made by S. Paul. In confirmation of this, Mr. Scudamore points out that a year or two later, S. Paul, at Troas,<sup>1</sup> "broke bread" *previous to* the Agape,<sup>2</sup> which was the subsequent meal.

Bishop Wilberforce, when condemning Evening Communion in his *Charge* (A.D. 1860), writes: "No careful student of the New Testament will doubt that in the abuses which had crept into the Corinthian Church

<sup>1</sup> Acts xx.

<sup>2</sup> *Notitia Eucharistica*, p. 31.



touching the Holy Eucharist, and in S. Paul's treatment of them, they found the occasion and the time of the alteration."<sup>1</sup>

### ANCIENT TESTIMONY.

1. The letters of Pliny the younger, proconsul of Bithynia, in Asia Minor, are well known. In one of them (letter xcvi.)<sup>2</sup> he reports to the Emperor Trajan the result of his enquiry into the practices of the Christians who had received their teaching but forty years previously from S. Peter himself. "They affirmed," he writes (A.D. 104), "the whole of their guilt or their error was that they met on a certain stated day *before it was light*, and addressed themselves in a form of prayer to Christ as to some God, binding themselves by a solemn oath" (or sacrament—"sacramento"<sup>3</sup>), "not for the purposes of any wicked design, but never to commit any fraud, theft,

First Century.

<sup>1</sup> BISHOP WILBERFORCE's *Charge* (1860), p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> MELMOTH's *Letters of Pliny*, ii. 671.

<sup>3</sup> "Can there be any reasonable doubt what the sacramentum against sin was, wherewith these early confessors said that they bound themselves 'very early' on the resurrection morning, &c.? . . . Was it ever known in the Church of Christ that men should be allowed to take an oath that they would not commit sin? . . . They knew full well that not in any vow but in closest communing with their risen Lord was their strength against iniquity; and, speaking to a heathen, to whom the secrets of their faith could not be revealed, they would most naturally apply the word *sacramentum* to the Mystery of the Holy Eucharist. Doubtless it was for the Celebration that they thus assembled themselves before light."—BISHOP WILBERFORCE's *Charge*, p. 14.

or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up, *after which* it was their custom to separate, and then reassemble, to eat in common a harmless meal."

2. The testimony which Tertullian (A.D. 200) has borne is none the less weighty because it is incidentally afforded. He speaks of Fasting Communion as an ordinary occurrence—as a matter of course—in the second of the two treatises which he addressed to his wife, and which contain a statement of his objections to her marrying again in the event of her surviving him. In any instance, he thinks, to be deprecated, re-marriage would be especially lamentable in the case of a Christian widow who might contemplate being united to a heathen. The incompatibility of the daily life under such circumstances is strongly urged. "Wilt thou escape notice," he asks "when thou signest" (*i.e.* with the cross), "thy bed, thy little body" (a husband's term of endearment) . . . "when thou risest even in the night to pray? . . . Will not thy husband know what thou tastest in secret *before all food?* and if he knoweth it to be bread," &c.<sup>1</sup>

And again he writes: "The Sacrament of the Eucharist commanded by the Lord at the time of supper and to all, we receive even at our meetings before daybreak."<sup>2</sup>

3. S. Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage and martyr for the faith (A.D. 258), thus defends the custom of the Church

<sup>1</sup> *Ad Uxorem*, ii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *De Cor. Mil.* Lib. Fathers, x. 164.

in his time: "It may be said that it was not in the morning, but after supper, that the Lord offered the mingled cup. Ought we then Third Century. to celebrate the Lord's cup after supper? . . . It behoved Christ to offer about the evening of the day that the very hour of sacrifice might show the setting and the evening of the world, as it is written in Exodus, 'And all the people of the synagogue of the children of Israel shall kill it in the evening;' and again in the Psalms, 'Let the lifting up of my hands be an evening sacrifice.'<sup>1</sup> But we celebrate the resurrection of the Lord in the morning."<sup>2</sup>

4. S. Basil, Bishop of Cæsarea, in Cappadocia, who died A.D. 380, says, in regard to priests, Fourth Century. "It is not possible to venture on the sacred work (of Celebration) without fasting."<sup>3</sup>

5. S. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan (A.D. 390), in his *Book of Elias and of Fasting*, chap. x., says, that "they prepared themselves by fasting to approach to the Holy Table."<sup>4</sup>

Fasting before Communion seems to be taken for granted in a Lenten sermon of S. Ambrose on Psalm cxviii.<sup>5</sup>

6. The testimony of S. Gregory of Nazianzen, the

<sup>1</sup> Psalm xli. 2.      <sup>2</sup> *To Cæcilius*, ep. lxii. 16. Clark's edition.

<sup>3</sup> *Hom. i. de Jejun.*, quoted in *Notitia Eucharistica*, p. 33.

<sup>4</sup> *History of Ecclesiastical Writers*, i. 276. By Dupin, Doctor of the Sorbon and Regius Professor of Divinity in Paris. A.D. 1722.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in a letter of Rev. W. Watson, in the *Guardian*, Dec. 7th, 1881.

friend of S. Basil, and Bishop of Constantinople (A.D. 381), who comes next in chronological order, has been already given.

7. So strong was the feeling about Fasting Communion in the fourth century that a Bishop of Alexandria was asked, "If a man in washing or bathing swallow a drop of water, may he communicate after it?"<sup>1</sup>

8. S. Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople (who died A.D. 407), says: "Thou, before thou hast partaken; fastest, that in a certain way thou mayest  
Fifth Century. appear worthy of the Communion;"<sup>2</sup> and on another occasion he repudiates, with even more than his characteristic vehemence, the thought of having communicated any one who did not receive fasting.<sup>3</sup>

9. S. Augustine (A.D. 430), the greatest authority in the Church, to whom such frequent reference is made in the Book of Common Prayer ("What would S. Augustine have said?"<sup>4</sup> being considered as the end of controversy), writes: "It is clear that when the disciples first received the Body and Blood of the Lord

<sup>1</sup> The answer was, "If Satan find an occasion of hindering us from the Communion, he will the oftener do it." Canonical Answers of Timothy, Bishop of Alexandria, A.D. 381. No. 16. Johnson's *Vade Mecum*, ii. 254.

<sup>2</sup> *Hom.* xxvii. Lib. Fathers, v. 380.

<sup>3</sup> Ep. 125, referred to by Bingham, xv. vii. 8. It may be, as Mr. Poyntz suggests, that S. Chrysostom regarded the charge as an accusation of untruthfulness.

<sup>4</sup> "What would S. Augustine have said if he had seen the ceremonies of late days used among us?" (Preface to Book of Common Prayer); a question which might perhaps not inaptly be put now.

they had not been fasting. Must we therefore censure the Universal Church because *the Sacrament is everywhere partaken of by persons fasting?* Nay, verily; for from that time it pleased the Holy Spirit to appoint, for the honour of so great a Sacrament, that the Body of the Lord should take the precedence of all other food entering the mouth of a Christian; and it is for this reason that *the custom referred to is universally observed.* For the fact that the Lord instituted the Sacrament after other food had been partaken of does not prove that brethren should come together to partake of that Sacrament after having dined or supped, or imitate those whom the apostle reprov'd and corrected for not distinguishing between the Lord's Supper and an ordinary meal. The Saviour indeed, in order to commend the depths of that Mystery more affectingly to His disciples, was pleased to impress it on their hearts and memories by making its institution His last act before going from them to His Passion. And therefore He did not prescribe the order in which it was to be observed, reserving this to be done by the apostles, through whom He intended to arrange all things pertaining to the churches. Had He appointed that the Sacrament should be always partaken of after other food, I believe that no one would have departed from that practice. But when the apostle, speaking of this Sacrament, says, 'Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another: and if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come

not together unto condemnation,' he immediately adds, 'And the rest will I set in order when I come.' Whence we are given to understand that, since it was too much for him to prescribe completely in an epistle *the method observed by the Universal Church throughout the world*, it was one of the things set in order by him in person; for we find *its observance uniform amid all the variety of other customs.*"<sup>1</sup>

The exception which proves the rule was in Africa, where it was the custom, in literal compliance with the circumstances attending the Institution of the Blessed Sacrament by our Lord, to celebrate in the evening on Maundy Thursday; but even so, the fast was not of necessity broken before Communion; for S. Augustine, an African bishop, writes that the Holy Eucharist "is offered in the morning for those who take food, because they cannot bear fasting and the use of the bath at the same time; and in the evening for those who have fasted all day."<sup>2</sup>

10. Sozomen, the ecclesiastical historian, who also lived in the fifth century, tells us of a contrary use only to condemn it: "There are several cities and villages in Egypt where, *contrary to the usages established elsewhere*, the people meet together on Sabbath evenings, and, although they have dined previously, partake of the Mysteries."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Januarius. Letter liv. vi. 8. Clark's Library.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vii. 9.

<sup>3</sup> *Eccles. Hist.* b. vii. chap. 19. Bohn's ed., p. 344; referred to by Bishop Forbes on Article xxxiv.

11. To the same effect writes his contemporary Socrates: "The Egyptians in the neighbourhood of Alexandria, and the inhabitants of Thebais, hold their religious meetings on the Sabbath, but do not participate of the Mysteries in *the manner usual among Christians in general*; for after having eaten and satisfied themselves with food of all kinds, in the evening, making their Oblation, they partake of the Mysteries."<sup>1</sup>

12. Anastasius Sinaita, a monk of Mount Sinai and Patriarch of Antioch (A.D. 561), in a treatise called "A Guide to the True Way," says, Sixth Century.  
"One ought to be fasting when he receives the Holy Eucharist."<sup>2</sup>

13. S. Isidore, Bishop of Seville (A.D. 601), states: "The disciples at first did not receive the Body and Blood of the Lord fasting. But Seventh Century.  
*now by the whole Church It is received fasting.*"<sup>3</sup>

Bishop Kingdon also refers to passages from the writings of Bishop Amalarius of Trêves (A.D. 800), and Walafrid Strabo, Abbot of Reichenall (A.D. 842), both of whom testify to the custom as maintained.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Eccles. Hist.* b. v. chap. 22. Bohn's ed., p. 289; referred to by Mr. Scudamore, *Not. Euch.* p. 33.

<sup>2</sup> DUPIN'S *History of Ecclesiastical Writers*, i. 563.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by Dr. Pusey. *Real Presence*, xxv.

<sup>4</sup> *Fasting Communion*, pp. 67, 68.

## COUNCILS.

Several Councils have given the weight of their ruling to the practice of Fasting Communion; and though the binding authority of these decisions would obviously be but local, yet they afford most important evidence of the prevailing custom of the age.

(a) The Council of Carthage, iii. c. 29 (A.D. 397):  
 "The Sacrament of the Altar shall be celebrated only  
 by those who are fasting, except on the one  
 anniversary when the Supper of the Lord  
 is commemorated."<sup>1</sup>

(b) In the years 418-419 A.D., at a Synod held at Carthage, "the African Code" of Canons was adopted.  
 No. 41 reads: "That the Sacrament of the  
 Altar must not be celebrated by any who  
 are not fasting, except on the day of the Lord's Supper. If Bishops or other persons die in the afternoon, let them be commended (to God) with prayers only, if they who are to perform it have broken their fast."<sup>2</sup>

(c) The Council of Braga (or Bracara), ii. c. 10 (A.D. 572): "If any presbyter shall be found in this madness after this our edict, so as to consecrate the Oblation not fasting, but after having taken any food, let him be immediately deprived of his office, and deposed by his own Bishop."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> BLUNT'S *Dictionary of Theology v. Fasting.*

<sup>2</sup> JOHNSON'S *Vade Mecum*, ii. 185. The African Code "was of very great authority in the old English Churches."

<sup>3</sup> BLUNT'S *Dictionary of Theology v. Fasting.*



(d) The Synod of Antisiodorum, (or Auxerre), (A.D. 578) presided over by Aunacharius, Bishop of Tours (canon 19), "forbids priests and deacons to say, or serve, or assist at Mass, after they have eaten."<sup>1</sup>

(e) The Second Council of Macon (or Mascon), A.D. 585 (canon 6), "forbids priests to celebrate Mass after they have eat and drunk."<sup>2</sup>

(f) The Council of Toledo, vii. c. 2 (A.D. 646): "Lest what has been advised by reason of the languor of nature should be turned into a <sup>Seventh Century.</sup> dangerous presumption, let it be understood that no one shall celebrate Mass after taking any, even the least, meat or drink."<sup>3</sup>

(g) The Council of Trullo,<sup>4</sup> c. 29 (A.D. 692). In reference to the African custom: "Although for some local reasons profitable to the Church those divine Fathers made such a regulation, yet since there is no inducement for us to abandon the strict line, we determine, *in accordance with the apostolic traditions of our fathers*, that in the last week of Lent the fifth day must not be broken; for it is a dishonouring of the whole Lent."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> DUPIN's *History of Ecclesiastical Writers*, i. 714.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* i. 716.

<sup>3</sup> BLUNT's *Dictionary of Theology* v. *Fasting*.

<sup>4</sup> So called, Mr. Hallam tells us, from the palace, named Trullus by the Latins, at Constantinople, under the dome of which the Council was held.—*Mid. Ag.* ii. 176. These canons were recognized as part of the English Code by the fourth of the Legatine Canons at Cealchythe (possibly Chelsea), A.D. 785.—JOHNSON'S *Laws and Canons*, i. 90, 268.

<sup>5</sup> BLUNT'S *Dictionary of Theology* v. *Fasting*.

(h) No. 9 of the canons bearing the name of Nicephorus, Patriarch of Constantinople (A.D. 806),  
 Ninth Century. rules, evidently as an exception, that "the Communion may be given to a sick person who is near death, although he be not fasting."<sup>1</sup>

(i) The Council of Constance, sess. 13 (A.D. 1415):  
 "The praiseworthy authority of the sacred canons, and  
*the approved custom of the Church, has held and still holds*, that a Sacrament of this kind ought not to be  
 Fifteenth Century. celebrated after supper, nor received by the faithful who are not fasting, except in case of infirmity or other necessity, on a right either granted or admitted by the Church."<sup>2</sup> At this council the English Church was represented.

(j) The Council of Mayence, c. 33 (A.D. 1549): "We  
 Sixteenth Century. seriously enjoin all parish priests and ministers of churches not to give the Eucharist to any except those who are fasting and have made confession, unless it be in cases of infirmity and necessity."<sup>3</sup>

### THE LORD'S SUPPER.

It is to be observed that reference is made by the Synod of Carthage to "the day of the Lord's Supper." It may be asked, What day is this? or, to go to the root of the matter underlying the enquiry, What are we to understand by the expression itself—"The Lord's

<sup>1</sup> DUPIN's *History of Ecclesiastical Writers*, ii. 50.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Rev. N. Poyntz, in *The Fast before Communion*, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> BLUNT's *Dictionary of Theology* v. *Fasting*.

Supper"? In a volume recently published, containing some Occasional Papers of the revered John Keble, is one, "On the proper meaning of the term, The Lord's Supper, in S. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians." In this are reviewed the four names by which the Blessed Sacrament is ordinarily called. (1) The breaking of bread is the phrase adopted by S. Luke; (2) The Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ is the title which "describes the Sacrament by its inward part, as the other by its outward and visible sign;" (3) The Eucharist or Thank-offering. Of these three designations, Mr. Keble points out, the first is not now often met with; the second and third are in more common use; but the name most generally adopted and to be found in the Book of Common Prayer<sup>1</sup> is the Lord's Supper. "And a hasty English reader would, of course, add this as a fourth Scriptural title; it seems so clearly, at first sight or sound, to be used of the Communion in that celebrated passage, "When ye come together into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper." But the ill conduct complained of—that they made their own meal while professing to meet for the Lord's Supper—could have occurred only at the Agape, and not at the Holy Eucharist. "It was the feast of Charity, not the Communion itself, which would in some sense have been *a* Lord's Supper, if it had not been for such ill behaviour. To the feast of Charity therefore, and not to the Holy Communion,

<sup>1</sup> As well as in the headings of chapters in the Bible. (Acts xx.; 1 Cor. xi.)

is the name of 'the Lord's Supper' given in this place, if indeed it properly belongs to either of the two. This view seems to be, on the whole, confirmed both by the commentaries of the ancients on this passage, and by their phraseology generally in speaking of the Holy Communion. . . . Often as the ancients speak of the Holy Communion, it is very rarely, if ever, that they speak of it as the Lord's Supper; whereas the instances are innumerable in which it is called the Eucharist, or the Communion. . . . Now it does not seem likely, if the early Church had considered the Lord's Supper as the proper Scriptural name assigned by S. Paul to this Sacrament, that they would thus have avoided it on almost all occasions."<sup>1</sup> S. Augustine, in his letter to Januarius, suggests indeed that the Holy Eucharist (or indeed, more strictly speaking, the reception of our Lord's Body) *might be* called the Lord's Supper; but the very fact that this needs to be argued implies an exceptional and not an ordinary use of the phrase. Later, no doubt, this name was more often adopted; but this does not prove that S. Paul so used the expression. "We come then," Mr. Keble concludes, "to this remarkable result, that, as in the case of the Lord's-day, so also in that of the Holy Communion, the denominations, which have been deliberately selected, and are commonly used, by those theologians who profess to be most afraid of deviating from the letter of Scripture, are neither of

<sup>1</sup> Canon Luckock points out that S. Basil was the first to use this phrase in reference to the Holy Communion.—*Studies in Pr. Bk.*, p. 93.

them, in fact, Scriptural. As the first day of the week is nowhere called the Sabbath, so neither is the Holy Communion called the Lord's Supper in the inspired writers."<sup>1</sup>

S. Chrysostom, commenting on the words of S. Paul, "When ye come together into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper," says "He called the early meal a supper. . . . By the *Lord's* Supper he expresses this, the *community* of the feast. . . . Thou makest the Lord's Supper a private meal. . . . He gave His Body equally, but thou dost not give so much as the common bread equally."<sup>2</sup>

With this view coincides Mr. John Johnson, the well-known vicar of Cranbrook, 1709: "From the fourth age forward the Eucharist was sometimes called the Lord's Supper, but from the beginning it was not so. . . . It seems probable that the Lord's Supper and the Love Feast was the same, though it was not usually called the Lord's Supper, but only (perhaps) that Love Feast, which was made on the day of the institution of the Eucharist, which we now call Maunday Thursday."<sup>3</sup>

And Mr. Blunt writes: "The use of another term, 'the Lord's Supper,' is derived from 1 Cor. xi. 21, where S. Paul applies it to the Love Feast which then succeeded the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. It has led to much misapprehension of the true nature of the Sacra-

<sup>1</sup> *Occasional Papers and Reviews*, by Rev. John Keble, pp. 381-391.

<sup>2</sup> *Hom.* xxvii. *Lib. Fathers*, v. pp. 374-378.

<sup>3</sup> *Vade Mecum*, ii. 185, 4th Edition A.D. 1731.

ment ; but no mistake is so unworthy of educated persons as that committed in some churches, and lately in Westminster Abbey, by placing the last supper of our Lord with His disciples over the altar as a symbol of the institution of the Eucharist. These representations are usually copied from Leonardo da Vinci's picture, which was painted for a dining-room, not for a church."<sup>1</sup>

### THE PRACTICE OF THE ANGLO-SAXON CHURCH.

The custom of the Anglo-Saxon Church is unmistakable: "Then too, as now, the Sacrament was taken fasting, except in cases of extreme illness."<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Lingard testifies: "The conditions required of the (Anglo-Saxon) communicant were that he should come fasting—a practice which remounts to the first ages of Christianity,"<sup>3</sup> &c.

1. Archbishop Theodore of Canterbury (A.D. 673) imposed a seven days' penance on any one who should receive the Blessed Sacrament after food."<sup>4</sup>

2. The Venerable Bede (A.D. 734) corroborates our belief when he thus describes the last hours of (a) S. Hilda (Abbess of Whitby; died A.D. 680), who

<sup>1</sup> *The Sacraments and Sacramental Ordinances*, p. 108. "The Coptic Canons certainly identify the Supper with the Agape." "Evening Communion" in the *Christian Remembrancer*, No. cix. p. 198.

<sup>2</sup> *Rock's Church of our Fathers*, i. 130.

<sup>3</sup> *History and Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church*, i. 328.

<sup>4</sup> *Baron's Anglo-Saxon Witness*, p. 28.

"approached her last day, and *about cockcrow*, having received the Holy Communion to further her on her way, departed in peace;" and of (b) Cædmon, the monk, "*When it was past midnight* he asked them whether they had the Eucharist there."<sup>1</sup>

3. Archbishop Egbert of York (A.D. 740) ruled, "Whosoever shall eat before he go to Housel, let him fast seven days;"<sup>2</sup> and again, "Let a man fast according to the decision of the canons before he go to Housel."<sup>3</sup>

4. By a canon in the reign of King Edgar (A.D. 960) it was enjoined that "no man take the Housel after he hath broke his fast, except it be on account of extreme sickness."<sup>4</sup>

#### LATER EVIDENCE.

1. William of Malmesbury, when complaining of the customs of the English at the time of the Norman conquest, writes: "The nobility, given up to luxury and wantonness, went not to church *in the morning after the manner of Christians*, but merely, in a careless manner, heard matins and masses from a hurrying priest in their chambers."<sup>5</sup>

2. S. Osmund, Bishop of Salisbury (A.D. 1078–1099), to whom we are indebted for the Sarum Use, adopted in many dioceses, lays down the following rule with regard

<sup>1</sup> *Eccles. Hist.* b. iv. cc. 23, 24.

<sup>2</sup> *BARON'S Anglo-Saxon Witness*, p. 28.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *JOHNSON'S Laws and Canons of the Church of England.* Lib. Cath. Theol. i. 419.

<sup>5</sup> Bohn's edition, p. 279.

to the ablutions after duplicating: "When, however, any priest has to celebrate twice in one day, then at the first Mass he ought not to receive any ablution, but place it in the aumbry or in a clean vessel till the end of the next Mass, and then take both ablutions."<sup>1</sup>

3. S. Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury (A.D. 1093), says, "If a man puts off taking food because he has not yet that day been to the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, when he has accomplished what he had made up his mind to do first, it is not improperly said to him, Take your food now, because you have now done that for which you put off taking it."<sup>2</sup>

4. Hubert Fitzwalter, Archbishop of Canterbury Twelfth Cen- (A.D. 1200), ruled that "a priest might not tury. celebrate twice a day unless the necessity be urgent; and then he was to take the ablutions of the first Celebration after the second."<sup>3</sup>

5. Gratian, the Canonist (A.D. 1150), and author of the Decretal, an abridgment of Canon Law, quotes the ruling of the Council of Carthage as decisive; and concludes that, with the exception of Christmas Day, when the angels at night proclaimed the Nativity, Celebrations should be before 9 a.m., the hour of our Lord's Crucifixion and of the descent of the Holy Ghost; but he excludes from this rule the sick, who, in danger of death, must be communicated without delay.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Sarum Missal in English*, p. 319.      <sup>2</sup> *Cur Deus Homo*, c. ix.

<sup>3</sup> JOHNSON'S *Laws and Canons of the Church of England*. Lib. Cath. Theol. ii. 84.

<sup>4</sup> *Decretal. de Consec.* dist. i. cc. xlviii. xlix.; Migne, vol. 187, 1721.



6. In No. 6 of the Constitutions of Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury (A.D. 1222), we read, "After the priest hath received the Lord's Body and Blood at the altar, let him not twice drink the wine poured into the chalice, or spilt on" (*i.e.* poured over) "his fingers, though he do celebrate again the same day;" which Mr. Johnson understands to mean that a priest could not consume the ablutions at a first Celebration "if he knew he was to celebrate a second time; for the drinking of the unconsecrated wine broke his fast, though drinking of the consecrated cup did not, and the Mass was to be celebrated only by such as were fasting. This I take from Bishop Lyndwood."<sup>1</sup>

7. S. Thomas Aquinas, "the Angelic Doctor," who died A.D. 1274, is very distinct on this subject, and his teaching would suffice to regulate the practice of Western Christendom. "When he taught," says Dean Milman in his *Latin Christianity*, "the world listened in respectful silence." S. Thomas says that any one is prevented from the reception of the Blessed Sacrament after meat or drink, for a threefold reason. In the first place, according to what S. Augustine says, for the honour of this Sacrament, that it may enter the human mouth as yet untainted with any food; in the second place, to signify that it may be given to be understood that Christ, who is *Res hujus Sacramenti*, and His love, ought to hold the first place in our hearts,

<sup>1</sup> JOHNSON'S *Laws and Canons of the Church of England*. Lib. Cath. Theol. ii. 105.

as it is written by S. Matthew, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." In the third place on account of the danger of sickness. But he excepts the sick, who must be at once communicated even after food, if there be any doubt about their danger, lest they should die uncommunicated; for necessity knows no law. S. Thomas, moreover, rules that the fast must not be broken by taking water or medicine, and that it should be maintained from the previous midnight.<sup>1</sup>

8. In No. 3 of the Constitutions of Simon Langham, Archbishop of Canterbury (A.D. 1367), it is ruled: "Let  
 Fourteenth none presume to celebrate Mass twice a day,  
 Century. unless on the Day of the Nativity or Resurrection of our Lord, or when one has a corpse to bury,

<sup>1</sup> "Et sic impeditur aliquis a sumptione hujus Sacramenti post cibum et potum assumptum, triplici ratione; Primò quidem, sicut Augustinus dicit (loc. cit.) *in honorem hujus Sacramenti*; ut scilicet in os hominis intret, nondum aliquo cibo vel potu infectum; Secundò, propter significationem, ut scilicet detur intelligi, quod Christus, qui est res hujus Sacramenti, et charitas Ejus, debet primò fundari in cordibus nostris, secundum illud Matth. 6. 33: *Quærite primùm regnum Dei*; Tertio, propter periculum vomitus et inebrietatis, quæ quandoque contingunt ex hoc quod homines inordinate cibis utuntur, sicut et Apostolus dicit 1 Cor. xi. 21: *Alius quidem esurit, alius autem ebrius est*. Ab hac tamen generali regulâ excipiuntur infirmi, qui statim communicandi sunt, etiam post cibum, si de eorum periculo dubitatur, ne sine comunione decedant, quia necessitas legem non habet. Unde dicitur de Consec. dist. 2, cap 93, *Presbyter infirmum statim communicet, ne sine comunione moriatur*." (Gratian.) "Neque post assumptionem aquæ, vel alterius cibi aut potûs, vel etiam medicinæ, in quantumcumque parvâ quantitate licet hoc Sacramentum accipere." "Si post mediam noctem aliquis sumpserit aliquid per modum cibi vel potûs, non potest eâdem die hoc sumere Sacramentum; potest verò, si ante mediam noctem."—*Summa Theologica*, part iii. 80. 8.

and that in his own church only; and then let not the celebrator drink the washings of his fingers and of the cup.”<sup>1</sup>

9. Martin Bucer, writing to Hooper, Nov. 1550, said, “It is evident that our Lord Jesus Christ, as regards the ministry, and the word, and the Sacraments, has prescribed to us, in His own words, only the substance, and has left His Church at liberty <sup>Sixteenth Century.</sup> to order everything else which appertains to the decent and useful administration of His mysteries. Hence *we celebrate the sacred Supper, neither in the evening, nor in a private house, nor recumbent, nor among men,*” &c.<sup>2</sup>

10. And Peter Martyr, under date of Nov. 4th, 1550 : “At this day we so administer the Eucharist in the morning time, that *after dinner we will not have the Communion* in the sacred assembly.”<sup>3</sup>

11. In a sermon preached at “Eaton Colledge,” by Mr. Roger Hutchinson, the Sunday next before Easter, 1552, on the gospel for the day, he says, “In that the texte sayth that whyles they were eating, Jesus toke bread, and ordeined His last Supper, some do reason hereof that the Sacrament is not to be received fastyng, *as the custome nowe is*, but after other meates and drynkes . . . *the universall Church commonly accordyng to Paules mynd to the Corinthians useth nowe to celebrate the Lordes Supper fastyng.*” Perhaps this testimony to

<sup>1</sup> JOHNSON'S *Laws and Canons of the Church of England*. Lib. Cath. Theol. ii. 440.

<sup>2</sup> GORHAM'S *Reformation Gleanings*, pp. 204–206, quoted by Rev. T. W. Perry in *Notes on the Judgment of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council: Hebbert v. Purchas*, p. 273. <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

the then custom is the more striking as borne by a man who was not himself prepared rigidly to enforce its observance, as he adds: "Notwithstanding as he doeth well whiche commeth fastynge to the Lordes table, so he doeth not ill *whyche by occasion cometh* after that he hath eaten and dronke;" but the paragraph is summed up in the margin in these words, "It is best to come to Christes banket fasting."<sup>1</sup>

12. Richard Cosin, Dean of the Arches (who died A.D. 1597), speaks of the Primitive Church having altered "the time of the receiving the Sacrament of the Eucharist, being according to the institution usually received after supper, to have it received *as it is* in the morning fasting."<sup>2</sup>

13. Dr. Jeremy Taylor, Bishop of Down and Connor (who died A.D. 1667), says, "*It is the custom of the Church of great antiquity and proportionable regard* that every Christian that is in health should receive the Blessed Sacrament fasting. . . . Of some also in Africa that communicated at evening S. Austin speaks, and of others who communicated both morning and evening; at evening because S. Paul called it 'the Lord's Supper,' and in the morning from *the universal custom of the Church, which in most cases from the very days of the apostles prevailed*, that the Holy Eucharist

<sup>1</sup> "A Faithful Declaration of Christe's Holy Supper" (1552); the fyrst sermon. Referred to by Right Rev. H. T. Kingdon, Bishop-Coadjutor of Fredericton, in *Fasting Communion*, p. 97.

<sup>2</sup> *An Answer to an Abstract of certeine Acts of Parliament*, p. 60. A.D. 1584.

should be given to none but to them that were fasting, which thing was also decreed in the third Council of Carthage, and *hath been observed ever since. And in this the Church hath not without good reason taken up the custom.*"<sup>1</sup>

And again, "Fasting before the Holy Sacrament is a custom of the Christian Church, and derived to us from great antiquity; and the use of it is, that we might express honour to the Mystery by suffering nothing to enter into our mouths before the Symbols."<sup>2</sup>

And yet once more, "*It is a Catholic custom that they who receive the Holy Communion should receive it fasting. This is not a duty commanded by God; but unless it be necessary to eat, he that despises this custom gives nothing but the testimony of an evil mind.*"<sup>3</sup>

14. Dr. Edward Lake, Archdeacon and Prebendary of Exeter, and Chaplain of the Duke of York, afterwards King James the Second—Chaplain also and Tutor to the Lady Mary, subsequently the Queen of William III.—was the author of a devotional work called *Officium Eucharisticum*. The volume is remarkable, not only on account of the position occupied by the author, and the consequent and necessary influence exercised by him, as well as of the fact that it bears upon it the Archiepiscopal Imprimatur, "Ex *Ædibus Lambeth*, June 13, 1677," but also from its wide circulation and extensive adoption. Between 1673, when the book was first published, and 1743, it

<sup>1</sup> *Worthy Communicant*, vii. 1.      <sup>2</sup> *Life of Christ*, ii. xii. 13.

<sup>3</sup> *Ductor dubitantium*, iii. iv. 15.

had passed through no fewer than thirty editions. Dr. Lake's teaching was thus authoritatively sanctioned, and largely accepted. And one of his instructions for Sunday morning is as follows: "Having thus finished your closet devotions, you go forth to the church or chapel fasting, that so a portion from God's Table may be the first morsel."<sup>1</sup>

How natural, after this, does it appear when we meet with the following occurrence, recorded in 1729, of Lady Stanley, aunt of Mrs. Delany: "On Sunday morning *she got up very early to receive the Sacrament*;"<sup>2</sup> for though occurring within what Dr. Pusey calls "the dreary interval of the eighteenth century," this incident happened within the time covered by the circulation of Dr. Lake's Manual of Devotion.

15. Dr. Anthony Sparrow, Bishop successively of Exeter and Norwich<sup>3</sup> (who died A.D. 1688), tells us the usual hour for the celebration of the Holy Communion was 9 a.m.; and for this selection he assigns various reasons; and amongst others, "Till the service was ended men were persuaded to be fasting, and therefore it was thought fit to end all the service before noon, that people might be free to eat."<sup>4</sup> . . . "This Sacra-

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in the *Church Times*, Sept. 23, 1881.

<sup>2</sup> MRS. DELANY'S *Autobiography*, i. 206.

<sup>3</sup> The first publication of the *Officium Eucharisticum* by the Archdeacon of Exeter in 1673, and its archiepiscopal approval in 1677, strikingly synchronise with the episcopacy of Bishop Sparrow at Exeter (1667) and at Norwich (1667-1676).

<sup>4</sup> *A Rationale upon the Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England*, Oxford edition, p. 196.

ment should be received fasting. And so was the practice of the universal Church, says S. Augustine, *which is authority enough* (in things of this nature; namely, circumstances of time, &c.) *to satisfy any that do not love contention.* (1 Cor. xi. 16.) Yet it will not be amiss in a word to show the reasonableness of *this Catholic usage.*" The Bishop then urges the suitableness for ourselves in this custom, the act of reverence therein shown to our Lord, and quotes S. Augustine's letter to Januarius.<sup>1</sup>

Bishop Kingdon has, with great diligence and considerable research, accumulated a vast amount of evidence, in addition to that which has been already mentioned, confirmatory of the fact that Fasting Communion has been the practice of the Catholic Church. He refers to John de Burgh, Professor of Theology and Chancellor of the University of Cambridge in the thirteenth century, author of *Pupilla Oculi*; Maurice of Prague, A.D. 1417; Gabriel Biel, A.D. 1490; Sylvester Prieras, author of *Summa Summarum*, and Hittorpius, in the sixteenth century; Cardinal Bona in the seventeenth; while the eighteenth is made to contribute the testimony of Quarti and Gavanti.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *A Rationale upon the Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England*, Oxford edition, p. 219.

<sup>2</sup> *Fasting Communion*, pp. 88, 82, 27, 88, 71. It is to be regretted that such an able contribution as Bishop Kingdon's to the question before us should be disfigured by a prejudice so evident and a bias so strong; e.g., "The particular statements of individual Fathers" (*i.e.* on Fasting Communion) "do nothing more than evidence the existence of a practice, which will excuse its use (!) in individuals now." (p. 78.)

## MORE RECENT OPINIONS.

1. The judgment of the Rev. Joseph Bingham (A.D. 1722), the learned author of the *Antiquities of the Church*, is, "*The general custom of the Church was to celebrate the Eucharist fasting.*" "It was a rule in the African Church to receive the Eucharist fasting at all times, except one day, which was the Thursday before Easter, commonly called *Cœna Domini*, because it was the day on which our Saviour celebrated His last supper, and instituted the Eucharist after supper; in imitation of which it was the custom to celebrate the Eucharist after supper on this day in the African churches, but *on no other day whatsoever.*"<sup>1</sup>

2. "The Universal Church has from the beginning maintained the custom of communicating only when fasting."<sup>2</sup>

Can Bishop Kingdon, who unhesitatingly says, "True it is that Charles V. never received fasting" (p. xv.), repeated (p. 95), have met with the statement to the contrary made in Stirling's *Cloister Life of the Emperor* (p. 185), referred to below. Bishop Kingdon has an easy method of dealing with those from whom he has the misfortune to differ; Mr. Bingham, the author of the *Christian Antiquities*, is "grammatically puzzling" (p. xiv.); Mr. Scudamore "can hardly have read the context" of a passage of S. Basil, which he quotes; and even S. Thomas has been "misled," and "could not have read" S. Augustine's letter to Januarius, even while referring to it (pp. 18, 19), pressing his quotation "farther than the context will allow." (p. 88.)

<sup>1</sup> BINGHAM'S *Antiquities*, xv. vii. 8.

<sup>2</sup> PETER COLLET, *Institutiones Theologiæ Moralis*, iv. 455. A.D. 1768.



3. Bishop Wilberforce, in his *Charge* of November, 1860, dealt with the question of Evening Communion, and said, "*I cannot allow that any difficulties warrant this innovation,*"<sup>1</sup> his grounds for this conclusion being: "(1) that it is *contrary to the usage of the whole Church*, certainly from very early, and most probably from Apostolic times; (2) that it involves an unlawful use of our Liturgy;<sup>2</sup> and (3) that it directly tends to the desecration of the highest rite of our holy religion." After referring to Pliny's letter, the bishop says, "From this time downward we have an unbroken chain of proof as to the *practice of the Church*. The words of Tertullian in the second century are plainly to the point; so are those of S. Cyprian in the third; and in the fourth we have S. Augustine's reference to the practice of celebrating on one evening in the week; namely, on the anniversary of the institution of the Lord's Supper, in words which prove the *universality of the rule*, to which this was a special exception. Thus we trace up *an unbroken custom of condemning late Communion*s to within the period when the voice of the beloved apostle must have been instructing the Christian Church in the Lesser Asia."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> BISHOP WILBERFORCE'S *Charge*, p. 13. A.D. 1860.

<sup>2</sup> As the rubrical direction that the collect shall be said at the *Evening Service next before*.

<sup>3</sup> BISHOP WILBERFORCE'S *Charge*, p. 14. A.D. 1860. An incumbent in his diocese has given us an instance in which the Bishop carried his teaching into practice: "I remember an attempt being made to hold a special Communion for Sunday-school teachers in this

4. Amongst others whose opinions on the subject will carry the greatest weight may be mentioned Dr. Christopher Wordsworth, Bishop of Lincoln, who writes: "In sub-apostolic times it became usual to receive the Holy Communion very early in the morning." "It cannot be doubted that at the close of the fourth century it was *the practice of the Church* to receive the Communion before any other food."<sup>1</sup>

5. Dr. Pusey writes of Fasting Reception: "This rule of the ancient Church, of which we have evidence towards the close of the second century, was *of the nature of a positive law*. Had there been any intrinsic irreverence in taking food before receiving the Body and Blood of Christ in the Holy Eucharist, our blessed Lord would not so have instituted it. Old canons also dispense with its observance in the case of the sickly; and the Latin Church allows the Holy Eucharist to be received after food by the dying."<sup>2</sup>

6. Dr. Döllinger says: "The custom of receiving the Eucharist fasting seems to have arisen among the people

part (Herne Hill) of the then diocese of Winchester. It was being arranged for the evening. The Bishop (Wilberforce), however, threatened to withdraw from his office of Patron to our branch of the Church of England Sunday School Institute if we held an Evening Communion. We pointed out the impossibility of getting our teachers together on a week-day morning in the winter; but he was firm, and told us, in answer to our disappointment, that we had better hold no Communion Service than have it in the evening."—Letter in the *Guardian*, January 4th, 1882.

<sup>1</sup> *Twelve Addresses*, pp. 74, 76. 1878.

<sup>2</sup> *The Real Presence*, xxv.

without any express law, and to have sprung from respect to the sacred banquet of the Lord. Tertullian mentions this practice, and so general had it become in the fourth century that the enemies of S. John Chrysostom adduced this, amongst other accusations, that he had admitted persons who were not fasting to Communion.”<sup>1</sup>

7. The conclusion at which the Rev. J. H. Blunt arrives is: “Fasting before Communion has been practised from the time of the apostles in all countries.”<sup>2</sup>

8. Canon Bright, Regius Professor of Ecclesiastical History in the University of Oxford, says: “Nothing less than the authority of apostles will adequately account for *the universality of Morning Celebrations in all the widely-separated branches of the Church*. Nothing less than the fearful scandals of the Corinthian practice—which combined the ordinary physical excitement of a late hour with the evils of indulgence at a previous meal—would most naturally account for the *universal abandonment* of a traditional usage, which at least might plead literal correspondence with the formal action of our Lord when instituting the Sacrament. Is it too much to say that we are asked by the partisans of the modern innovation to ignore the experience and to reverse the decision of the apostles themselves?”<sup>3</sup>

9. The Rev. A. R. Ashwell, Canon of Chichester, wrote: “Sunday evening Communion never existed anywhere.”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *History of the Church*, translated by Dr. Cox, ii. 322.

<sup>2</sup> *Dictionary of Theology v. Fasting*.

<sup>3</sup> *Evening Communion*, p. 7.      <sup>4</sup> *Evening Communion*, p. 8.

10. Mr. Scudamore, the author of *Notitia Eucharistica*, testifies: "It was *the universal rule and practice*, derived from primitive times, to celebrate in the morning only (except at certain seasons specified by authority), and I am not aware that before the present age any priest of our Church ever desired to break through a rule so venerable from its antiquity, and wholesome in its effect."<sup>1</sup>

It is greatly to be deplored that two Bishops of the English Church—the one the first Bishop of a newsee, the other of a diocese which has been reconstituted—have inaugurated their episcopacy by departing from what Bishop Wilberforce, as quoted above, spoke of as the "unbroken custom of condemning late Communion," and have actually advocated, to the grief of thousands of devout churchpeople, a practice as novel as, in the view of the writer of a recent admirable article in the *Guardian*, it is uncalled for.<sup>2</sup> Whether it be practicable for people to attend church at an early hour of the

<sup>1</sup> *Notitia Eucharistica*, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> An early hour for celebration "has been determined by the reverential feeling of the whole Church throughout the world until quite recent times. It seems to us an unhappy mark of degeneracy and decay that a certain school of Churchmen should have adopted Evening Communion as a sort of pet custom of their own. . . . As to the plea that there are those who desire to communicate and cannot possibly do so at any other time, we must say frankly that we do not believe it. . . . We fear that indolence amongst some of our clergy has something to do with the growing tendency to celebrate in the evening." —*Guardian*, Dec. 7th, 1881.

day is sufficiently shown to the minds of all those (except such as are both ignorant and wish to remain so) who have any acquaintance with the practice which prevails on the Continent, not to mention many other parts of the world. It is well known that the early Celebrations in the churches of the Roman Communion are daily attended by many thousands before English people are out of their beds;<sup>1</sup> and an enquiry amongst the servants at any Continental hotel (and it is specially on behalf of this class of the community that a departure from primitive and Catholic usage is advocated), will satisfy any one desiring the information, that even in the very height of the season it can be arranged to make time to attend church in the early morning. If it be urged that a national custom in foreign countries may not be suitable in England, it may be well to recall what was usual among our fathers in days of old.

Mr. Walcott quotes Harding (A.D. 1560) as saying: "Where great multitudes of Christian people is, as in towns, we see some resort to church early in the morning, making their spiritual oblations to the intent to serve God ere they serve men in their worldly affairs. Others come at their convenient opportunity, some at 6, some at 7, some at 9 or 10 of the clock. All well-

<sup>1</sup> In the recently published and deeply interesting biography of Charles Lowder, however, we read of the late Mr. Peter Hoare, of Beckenham, a member of a family which has given the Church many true and devoted sons, that he "used to drive up each day to town, twelve miles, starting at five o'clock in the morning, to be present at the daily celebration in a city church." (p. 252.)

disposed people about Paul's cannot come to Postles' Mass at 4 or 5 of the clock in the morning."<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Walcott also tells us that the usual hour for the first celebration at Chichester and Lichfield in 1597 was at 5 or 6, according to the season; at Durham, in 1567, there was service at 6, and Bishop Cosin speaks of 5 as the hour both summer and winter. In 1597 Matins was said at S. Paul's at 5 in summer and 6 in winter, and in 1803 at 6 throughout the year. At Wells, in 1615, Matins was said at 6. In 1634 morning prayers were said at Worcester at 6; at Hereford at 5 or 6.30, according to the season; at Wells at 6 in the summer and 7 in the winter. In 1660 there were prayers at Worcester at 6. There were early prayers at Norwich at 6 in the summer, and 7 in the winter; and at S. Paul's and at Westminster Abbey at 6. At Durham, in 1682, there were prayers *for servants* at 6. In 1730 Matins was at Christ Church, Oxford, at 6; at Christ Church, Dublin, at 6 in the summer and 8 in the winter. In 1547 and 1818, at York, there were prayers at 6 in the summer and 7 in the winter; in 1547 also celebration at 9 a.m. Until recent times there were morning prayers at Lincoln at 6, at Salisbury at 6.30, at Winchester at 6, &c.<sup>2</sup>

Whether such episcopal encouragement of Evening Communion be a crying need of the day, and to the

<sup>1</sup> BISHOP JEWEL's *Works*, ii. 630. Quoted in *Traditions and Customs of Cathedrals*, p. 178, by Rev. PREBENDARY WALCOTT.

<sup>2</sup> *Traditions and Customs of Cathedrals*, p. 177, &c., by Rev. PREBENDARY WALCOTT. *The Church and the Stage*, p. 13.

marked exclusion of any even similar encouragement of the practice sanctioned by the reverence of eighteen centuries, is shown in the following lamentable statistics taken from Mackeson's *Guide to the Churches in London*:

	1868	1869	1870	1871	1872	1873	1874	1875	1876	1877	1878	1879	1880
Churches . .	617	620	651	677	719	742	759	786	802	848	864	872	887
Evening Com- munion . .	47	65	97	130	153	178	179	187	205	219	246	262	267
Percentage . .	7	10	14	19	21	23	23	23	25	25	28	30	30

that is to say, evening Celebrations have increased during the years which Mr. Mackeson's statistics cover more than fourfold. It is fair to add that the early Celebrations have also in the same space of time greatly increased in number, but only threefold:

	1868	1869	1870	1871	1872	1873	1874	1875	1876	1877	1878	1879	1880
Early Celebra- tions . .	125	135	159	210	258	295	310	386	390	440	458	478	533
Percentage . .	20	21	24	31	35	39	40	49	48	51	53	54	60

As a practical answer let me quote the words of the present Bishop of Lichfield, whose matured judgment has been formed from his long experience at Paddington, S. Marylebone, Ealing, Newington, and Kensington, if antiquity be not sufficient. Let the ninety-first Bishop of the old see reply to the first Bishop of the new one: "I am glad to find that in a large number of cases there are Celebrations at an early hour of the day. I observe with less satisfaction the prevalence, especially

in large towns, of Evening Communion. I am by no means prepared to speak of this arrangement in the strong terms of condemnation which are sometimes employed with respect to it, but nevertheless I deeply regret it. I do not indeed regard it as in itself inherently wrong. That which was for however short a time tolerated in apostolic days, cannot have in it the nature of sin; but, on the other hand, I certainly feel that it is contrary to the mind of the Church, guided as we profess to believe by the promised help of the Holy Spirit. The practices of primitive days were in many instances necessary or permissible, under the exceptional circumstances of a time when the Church had only imperfectly developed its discipline and its order; but in all later times the custom of Evening Communion has been almost universally unknown. We may well believe that just as the observance of the Jewish Sabbath continued for a considerable time after the foundation of the Christian Church, but gradually gave place to the festival of the Lord's-day; so the Evening Communion, instituted though it was at the time of the evening meal connected with the passover, was gradually abandoned for the early Celebration, of which mention is made by more than one writer within the first century after the day of Pentecost. Further, it can scarcely be denied that in the history of the Reformed Church of England such a practice has been unknown until within recent days. I am aware of the argument that is often *used* on behalf of the late hour, that it is impossible



for certain classes of our parishioners to come either at midday or in the morning; but *my own experience as a parish priest leads me to believe that this is not so.* I have known an Evening Communion discontinued with the substitution of sufficiently early hours on the Sunday morning, and the addition of a forenoon service on one of the other days of the week, *without the loss, so far as I could ascertain after careful enquiry, of a single communicant, who had formerly attended the evening service.* I believe that a similar result would follow if the same course were adopted in other parishes, and I earnestly trust that the experiment may be tried. I would only add, that to leave to the closing hours of the Lord's-day, after all its necessary demands upon the spiritual powers of the worshippers, that special and only service, the observance of which is commanded by our blessed Lord Himself, seems to me likely to foster, even if it does not indicate, a somewhat imperfect and languid condition of spiritual life, the very reverse of that which is likely to be quickened and sustained by the dedication of the earliest hours of the day to these holy mysteries."<sup>1</sup>

The truth is Sunday sloth is becoming, if it be not already, a national sin. The habits of the English people, with regard to early rising, contrast unfavourably with, I believe, every nation in Europe. The Emperor of Brazil, during his recent visit to England,

<sup>1</sup> *A Charge delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of Lichfield at his Primary Visitation (1879-80) by Right. Rev. Dr. MacLagan, ninety-first Bishop.*

had attended Church and been half over London before English tradespeople had removed their shutters. The ideal Sunday of the working-classes may thus be described: Overnight, shopping deferred, though wages are paid early, till ten or eleven o'clock at night, or even later. Sunday dawns. After a late breakfast the children are dressed in their best clothes, and despatched to the Sunday-school that the mother may be free to devote herself to the preparation of the Sunday dinner, the culinary event of the week; while the father, undisturbed, in summer in the sunshine, in winter over the fire, enjoys his tobacco, and the study of *Reynolds*, or *Lloyd*, or worse. At one o'clock the children have returned looking their brightest; the dinner is ready; the parents have donned their holiday attire, and every one is in the best of tempers. The meal indulged in (perhaps to excess), affairs assume a new aspect; the children are fidgety, and father is already drowsy, and is fast becoming ruffled as his inclination to sleep off the effects of his meal is interfered with by their noise. The Sunday-school once more offers a timely remedy, and by the hour of the return of the children a strong cup of tea brings Church "within the range of practical" religion. Who that has any acquaintance with the working-classes will deny that this is too often but a faithful picture? and yet we are gravely told this method of spending the Lord's-day is to be yielded to without an effort; such habits are to be sanctioned; *this is, on earth at least, the rest of the people of God;*

this is a fitting preparation for Communion ; these are the people who can only come to Church in the evening. The mission of the Catholic Church is henceforth not to raise the world, but to sink to its level ; to conform, not to transform ; no longer to strive against being overcome of evil, no longer to endeavour to overcome evil with good.

Evening Communions are a concession to the prevalent spirit of sloth. They are a total and wanton ignoring of antiquity ; but another example of the spirit of lawlessness, the disregard for authority, human and Divine, the *ἀνομία*, a characteristic of the last days, against which the Bishop of London was careful to warn his clergy in a recent episcopal charge.

What moral right, it may be asked, has any Branch of the Catholic Church, while claiming to be part of the great whole, gratuitously to disregard and set aside that which has received general approval ? If the Church (of England) hath power to decree rites and ceremonies, she has never formally sanctioned such a departure from Catholic custom as this. On the contrary, her uniform appeal has been to that which is primitive and Catholic. This is the very backbone of her teaching, the apology for the Reformation, the key-note to her formularies.

And on what ground can a single Bishop—a new Bishop of a new see—set himself against the consensus of Catholic Christendom in the matter of a custom observed as an act of reverence to our dear Lord ?

We are taunted sometimes with being compromised by our silence. A poor priest may be allowed to enter his protest against this modern innovation when he knows that he is giving expression to the deeply-wounded feelings of very many devout communicants in the Church of England.

### ROYAL CUSTOM.

Bishop Sumner has placed it on record that Fasting Communion was the reverent practice of George IV. "The king was usually in the habit of receiving It alone, and fasting, at ten o'clock."<sup>1</sup>

This royal homage paid by the then sovereign to the King of kings was doubtless a matter of tradition. Dean Stanley (who refers to Maskell), when speaking of the coronation of the English sovereigns, which has from the time of the Conqueror, without any exception, taken place in Westminster Abbey, says: "The celebration of the Communion always formed part of it."<sup>2</sup> "The breaking of the fast immediately after the Communion was in the retiring place by S. Edward's shrine in the Abbey."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Bishop Sumner*, p. 78.

<sup>2</sup> But the Dean subsequently (p. 87) excepts the coronations of James II. and Queen Anne, who very properly did not in their unbelief profane the Blessed Sacrament by communicating. There is no mention of a celebration in Sandford's *History of the Coronation of James II.*, 1687.

<sup>3</sup> *Historical Memorials of Westminster Abbey*, p. 44.

And Mr. Maskell himself tells us: "I may observe that the fatigue of the sovereign, as not unfrequently noticed in the old histories and records, is to be referred to the obligation under which he was to receive the Holy Communion fasting." And 'the Devyse' has an especial reference to this, succeeding the conclusion of the Mass. 'And also it is to wite, that a certein place nere the seid shryne must be prepared with trauers and curteyns, by the usshers of the King's chambre. Wherunto immediately the King shall goo, and there breke his faste yf hym lyste.'"³

"There is scarcely an instance upon record, from the time that the coronation of our sovereigns became an office especially to be fulfilled by the Church, that the celebration of the Holy Communion did not also form a part of it, either before or after, or mixed up with the rites and ceremonies of the solemnity itself. Nor has it been otherwise with other Christian nations."⁴

"The outward form of consecration in England remained essentially unaltered from the time of Ethelred to that of George IV."⁵

¹ At the close of the coronation service of Richard II., July 16th, 1377, "the boy king, exhausted by the long effort, was carried out fainting."—*Hist. Mem. West. Abbey*, p. 69.

² "The Devyse" is a MS. in the British Museum (Cotton. Tib. E., viii.), consisting of directions for the ceremonial to be observed at the coronation of Henry VIII.; the oath prefixed, with interlineations in the king's own hand.

³ MASKELL'S *Monumenta Ritualia Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ*, iii. lv.

⁴ MASKELL, iii. 39.

⁵ Introduction by Editor of *Liber Regalis* (a MS., 1350-1380, containing the order of coronation of Richard II.), Roxburghe Club, p. vi.

It was in the same devout and, as we would trust, hereditary spirit that King George III. at his coronation, and when about to receive the Blessed Sacrament, enquired of the Archbishop of Canterbury if the crown ought not to be laid aside during Communion. As the Most Rev. Prelate, after consultation as to a precedent with the Right Rev. and Very Rev. the Dean, failed to satisfy His Majesty, the King, with that instinctive and innate feeling of reverence which was so characteristically his, bared his head in recognition of the August Presence in which he knelt. But as a fact, had the Archbishop but known it (as Mr. Maskell points out), Henry II. and Queen Eleanor, and Charles II., and probably other sovereigns previously, as well as Queen Victoria since, fitly uncrowned themselves to receive the Holy Communion.

#### DISPENSATIONS.

The fact that dispensations were sometimes obtained is evidence that fasting reception was the ordinary rule. They were granted by the Pope alone, and very rarely, except in specified cases, such as "in mortis articulo, aut periculo," or necessity.<sup>1</sup>

"A dispensation," writes one much revered, "used to be given to kings of France and Spain to receive Holy Communion after food, because it was thought good for their people to see their kings communicate."

<sup>1</sup> HABERT'S *Theologia Dogmatica et Moralis*, ii. c. 20. A.D. 1771.

We are told, in reference to the Emperor Charles V., "In 1554 he had obtained a bull from Julius III., granting him a dispensation for breaking his fast, even on the mornings when he was to take the Sacrament. In the terms of the instrument, 'he was discharged from any scruple of conscience that he might experience for having done this at any time before, with a complete dispensation for the future'; and this was granted him, it was said, 'not only on account of the infirm state of his health, but of the pious zeal with which he had ever stood forth as the defender of the Catholic Faith.'"<sup>1</sup> Still, even with this permission, the Emperor appears to have made only exceptional use of it; for "although provided with an indulgence for eating before Communion, he never availed himself of it but when suffering from extreme debility."<sup>2</sup>

Thomas Bouchier, or Bouchier, Archbishop of Canterbury, after an episcopate of nearly fifty years, is stated to have received permission in 1483 to celebrate in the afternoon out of regard to his infirmity.<sup>3</sup>

In the early ages of the Church it was without doubt the practice to communicate infants as soon as they were baptised. S. Cyprian, as well as S. Augustine, refers to this, which was grounded on a literal interpretation of our Lord's words, "Except ye eat the Flesh

<sup>1</sup> PRESCOTT'S *History of the Reign of Charles V.*, ii. 491.

<sup>2</sup> *The Cloister Life of the Emperor Charles V.*, by W. STIRLING, afterwards Sir W. STIRLING MAXWELL, Bart., p. 166. A.D. 1853.

<sup>3</sup> WALCOTT'S *Sacred Archaeology*, p. 368.

of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you" (S. John vi. 53), a custom which was not superseded in the Gallican Church until the twelfth century. In reference to this there is an order in the Sacramentarium of S. Gregory, that *in case of necessity* baptized infants might receive nourishment before Communion; and the old Ordo Romanus of the ninth century directs,<sup>1</sup> "That infants, after they had been baptized, should not receive any food, nor be suckled *without the greatest necessity*, before they communicate in the Sacrament of the Body of Christ."<sup>2</sup> To the same effect writes the great Canonist Van Espen<sup>3</sup> (1646-1728): "The Eucharist should be given to children baptized at a tender or infantine age. Very many and most plain proofs exist of this discipline, especially among the Fathers of the first six or seven centuries. Indeed, in the Sacramentary of S. Gregory himself, under the heading of De Sabbato Sancto, it is said concerning baptized infants, 'Who also are not prevented from being suckled before Holy Communion if it should be

<sup>1</sup> "De parvulis providendum, ne postquam baptizati fuerint, ullum cibum accipiant, neque lactentur sine summâ necessitate, antequam communicent Sacramento Corporis Christi."

<sup>2</sup> BINGHAM's *Antiquities*, xv. iv. 7.

<sup>3</sup> "Ipsis pueris in tenerâ et infantili ætate baptizatis Eucharistia daretur. Hujus disciplinæ plurima eaque evidentissima testimonia extant, præsertim apud Patres sex aut septem primorum seculorum. Imò in ipso S. Gregorii Sacramentario titulo De Sabbato Sancto, de infantibus baptizatis dicitur: Qui etiam non prohibentur lactari ante Sacram Communionem si necesse fuerit: quod et præscribitur in veteri Ordine Romano, qui ipso Gregorio recentior putatur."—VAN ESPEN. *pars. ii. sec. i. tit. iv. cap. ii. 2.*



necessary,' which is also enjoined in the old Ordo Romanus, thought to be more recent than S. Gregory himself."

Bishop Wordsworth, when enforcing the truth that there is nothing unprofitable in the word of God, quotes the saying of Origen, "Nihil otiosum in Sacra Scripturâ." Now there are three marked acts of reverence to our Lord's Body which have been embedded in the pages of the Bible by God the Holy Ghost, and which seem specially to bear on the subject before us. 1. We are told that when the Saviour of the world was born the Virgin brought forth her "*firstborn Son*." (S. Luke ii. 7.) 2. When our Lord rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday the entry was made upon an ass' colt, "whereon (yet) never man sat." (S. Mark xi. 2; S. Luke xix. 30.) 3. After our Lord's death S. Joseph of Arimathæa laid the sacred Body "in his own *new* tomb" (S. Matthew xxvii. 60), "wherein never man before was laid" (S. Luke xxviii. 53), "wherein was never man yet laid." (S. John xix. 41.) And the Catholic Church, "discerning the Lord's Body" (1 Cor. xi. 29) in the Sacrament of the altar, has observed the custom of preparing for Him, Who deigns to come under our roof, a lodging in which nothing has that day been previously laid.

It is recorded of the Manna, a type of the Living Bread which came down from heaven, and with which our blessed Lord daily feeds His people, that, according to Divine appointment, it was gathered "every morn-

<sup>1</sup> Or, as S. Cyril of Jerusalem has said, *ὅθεν ἐκτὴν ῥέγμεν*.

ing," and that "when the sun waxed hot it melted." (Exod. xvi. 21.) David "in the wilderness" exclaims, "O God, thou art my God; *early* will I seek thee" (Ps. lxxiii. 1); and Solomon echoes the thought: "The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat." (Prov. xiii. 4.)

### TIME OF COMMUNION.

In the first Prayer Book of Edward VI. it was provided that the sick were to be communicated in the early part of the day. "If the day be not appointed for the open Communion in the Church, then" (upon convenient warning given) "the curate shall come and visit the sick person *afore noon*."

In the second Prayer Book of Edward VI. no exception was made even in favour of the dying. The rubric ran thus: "But if the sick man be in extremity, and shall desire the Sacrament, *either at the evening or in the night time*, the curate shall say to him that his faith and desire of the Sacrament is accepted for the receiving of It."

The difficulty which is here felt was to some extent met when the Blessed Sacrament was reserved; in this way the faithful could be most readily Divinely strengthened in their last agony and greatest need.

Mayest Thou, dearest Lord, be given  
In death's hour to be my food.

Van Espen has laid it down that a parish priest *should always* be prepared to administer the Holy

Eucharist to the sick, as readily after breakfast as before, by night as well as in the daytime. Yet the *Rituale Romanum* advises that this Sacrament should not be administered at night without urgent necessity. And the Synod of Bois-le-Duc shows the abuse, then not infrequent, of communicating the sick towards or after eventide, and desires that people should be cautioned that the sick, as much as possible, only receive the Sacrament when they are fasting, nor wait for the time of their extreme need. Still the Pastor, says the Synod, should never excuse himself from exercising his office, when the condition of the sick requires it, even if it be in the night, or at any other time, however inconvenient, that he receive a summons; and he by whose fault the sick shall have departed this life, unfortified by the Sacraments, is to be most heavily punished. The Synod of Antwerp has expressed itself to the same effect.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Parochus autem omni tempore paratus esse debet administrare infirmis hoc Sacramentum, tam post prandium, quam antè, tam noctu, quam interdiù. Monet tamen *Rituale Romanum*, *noctu hoc Sacramentum deferri non debere, nisi necessitas urgeat*. Et Synodus Buscoduensis sub Masio, tit. 7, cap. 15, arguit abusum, tunc frequentem, deferendi Eucharistiam ad ægros sub vesperam: monendumque vult populum, ut, quantum fieri potest, non nisi jejuni hoc Sacramentum ægri percipiant, nec expectent tempus ultimæ necessitatis. 'Numquam tamen Pastor (inquit Synodus), tempore nocturno, aut aliàs quantumvis importuno vocatus, cùm id infirmi status postulat, ab officio faciendo se excuset, gravissime puniendus, cujus culpâ infirmus non munitus Sacramentis è vita excesserit.' Idem habet Synodus Antverpiensis sub Miræo, tit. 7, cap. 7."—VAN ESPEN, pars. ii. sect. i. tit. iv. cap. iv. 12.

"The canonical hour for the Holy Communion," writes Prebendary Walcott, "is mentioned by S. Gregory of Tours as Tierce; at Durham it was 9, and by the Council of Norwich, 1257, was not to precede Prime. *The design was that communicants should be fasting.*"<sup>1</sup>

By the same writer it is noticed that the coronation of Edward VI. was at 9 a.m.;<sup>2</sup> the obsequies of Henry II. of France, at S. Paul's Cathedral in 1559, were at 9 a.m.<sup>3</sup> and the consecration of Archbishop Parker in the same year was at 5 or 6 a.m.<sup>4</sup>

Heylyn says that the ancient practice of the Church of England was that the celebration of the Holy Eucharist should be at 9 a.m. or 10 a.m., which custom continued in his time (A.D. 1637) at Winchester, at Southwell, and perhaps elsewhere. Mr. Scudamore adds that by canon law in the sixth century the third hour (9 a.m.) was fixed as the proper time, and that hence arose its name of the Sacred Hour; or, as in Italy, the Golden Hour; that in the ninth century it was a subject of enquiry at episcopal visitations whether the priest celebrated Mass at the appointed time, that is, about the third hour of the day; and S. Gregory of Tours (A.D. 575), and S. Gregory the Great (A.D. 590), make similar reference to the same hour.<sup>5</sup>

The rubric at the end of the office for Holy Matrimony

<sup>1</sup> *Sacred Archæology*. "Canonical Hours."

<sup>2</sup> STRYPE'S *Cranmer*, p. 142.

<sup>3</sup> STRYPE'S *Annals*, p. 128.

<sup>4</sup> STRYPE'S *Parker*, p. 57.

<sup>5</sup> *Notitia Eucharistica*, p. 29.

reads: "It is convenient that the newly-married persons should receive the Holy Communion at the time of their marriage, or at the first opportunity after their marriage." The rubric of A.D. 1549 was: "The new-married persons (the same day of their marriage) must receive the Holy Communion." The Wedding Mass formed a part of the marriage office in the Sarum book.<sup>1</sup> And the antiquity of this practice is evidenced in the words of Tertullian, who wrote (A.D. 200): "How can we find words to describe the happiness of that marriage, which the Church joineth together, and the Oblation confirmeth?"<sup>2</sup> &c." It is well to remember, in connection with this, two facts—(a) that the canonical hours for marriage are between eight a.m. and noon (Canons lxii. cii.); on which Mr. Blunt remarks: "The origin of the limitation is obscure; it was probably either (1) the desire to ensure publicity, or (2) the invariable association with Matrimony of the Holy Eucharist, which might only be received fasting;"<sup>3</sup> (b) that the feast which follows the wedding is traditionally known as "the breakfast." Sir W. Stirling Maxwell, in speaking of the custom of the Emperor Charles V., refers to the Italian saying, *dalla Messa, alla mensa*, "from Mass to mess;"<sup>4</sup> which reminds us of the expression of Sir Walter Scott, to this effect: "Mass and mess, (or prayers and provender,) hinder no man."

We have then, as to the prevalent custom of Fasting

<sup>1</sup> *Prayer Book Interleaved*, p. 207.    <sup>2</sup> *Ad. Ux.* ii. 8.

<sup>3</sup> *Dictionary v. Marriage.*

<sup>4</sup> *Cloister Life*, p. 96. 1853.

Communion in the Catholic Church, an accumulation of direct or corroborative evidence, of which the following is the most important :

In the first century, Pliny, in Bithynia.

In the second century, Tertullian, in North Africa.

In the third century, S. Cyprian, in North Africa.

In the fourth century, S. Basil, Bishop of Cappadocia ; S. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan ; S. Gregory Nazianzen, Bishop of Constantinople ; Timothy, Bishop of Alexandria, and the Council of Carthage.

In the fifth century, S. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, in Africa ; S. Chrysostom, Bishop of Constantinople ; Socrates and Sozomen, both of Constantinople ; the African Code.

In the sixth century, the Councils of Macon and Auxerre, or Antisiodorum, in France ; the Council of Braga, in Portugal ; Anastasius, Patriarch of Antioch ; and S. Gregory.

In the seventh century, the Council of Toledo, in Spain ; the Council of Trullo, at Constantinople ; Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury ; the Venerable Bede ; and S. Isidore, Bishop of Seville.

In the eighth century, Egbert, Archbishop of York.

In the ninth century, Nicephorus, Patriarch of Constantinople.

In the tenth century, an Anglo-Saxon Canon in the reign of King Edgar.

In the eleventh century, S. Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury ; S. Osmund, Bishop of Sarum ; and William of Malmesbury.

In the twelfth century, Herbert Fitzwalter, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Gratian the Canonist.

In the thirteenth century, S. Thomas Aquinas, and *Langton*, Archbishop of Canterbury.

In the fourteenth century, Langham, Archbishop of Canterbury.

In the fifteenth century, the Council of Constance.

In the sixteenth century, the Council of Mayence ; Cosin, Dean of the Arches ; Mr. Roger Hutchinson ; Martin Bucer, Professor of Divinity at Cambridge ; Peter Martyr, Professor of Divinity at Oxford.

In the seventeenth century, Van Espen, the Canonist ; Jeremy Taylor, Bishop of Down and Connor ; Anthony Sparrow, Bishop of Exeter, and afterwards of Norwich ; and Archdeacon Lake.

The remarkable evidence of the observance of the apparently unbroken custom of Fasting Communion at coronations through so many centuries alone serves to stamp the practice as national.

I may add another quotation from Mr. Blunt's *Dictionary of Doctrinal and Historical Theology*: "Persons about to die have always been allowed to receive the Blessed Sacrament, even though they may not be fasting ; and there are some (even among Roman theologians) who hold that this dispensation must be extended to the Paschal Communion for those who could not otherwise communicate without serious injury to health. It is argued that since communicating is of Divine obligation, and the preparatory fasting is only of ecclesiastical precept, therefore fasting must be given up rather than so necessary a duty as Communion be omitted. So, again, the same argument may be carried on beyond the one annual Communion, and weakly persons may be communicated not fasting, as often as

shall seem desirable, provided it is not done too frequently. The present authoritative practice of the Roman Church is, however, opposed to these relaxations, and admits to unfasting Communion only when the Eucharist is received as the Viaticum. The rules of the Eastern Church as to fasting before Communion are still more rigid than those of the Western. The observance of fasting before Communion has continued on in some places in England amidst all the lax habits of the last century,<sup>1</sup> and persons now living (A.D. 1869) remember their mothers omitting breakfast on Sacrament Sundays."<sup>2</sup>

We have seen what was the custom in France, in Italy, in Portugal, in Germany, and in Spain, as well as at Constantinople, in Asia Minor, in North Africa, and in the Anglo-Saxon Church. Now "so far was it from the purpose of the Church of England to forsake and reject the Churches of Italy, France, Spain, Germany, or any such like churches, in all things which they held and practised, that, as the *Apology of the Church of England* confesseth,<sup>3</sup> it doth with reverence retain those ceremonies, which doth neither endamage the Church of God, nor offend the minds of sober men; and only de-

<sup>1</sup> The writer of the article in the *Guardian*, to which reference has been already made, states that Fasting Communion was "common in our grandfathers' age amongst devout Church-people. Dr. Routh, of Magdalen, always, we believe, communicated fasting."

<sup>2</sup> v. *Fasting*.

<sup>3</sup> We keep still and esteem those ceremonies which we thought might be suffered without hurt to the Church of God."—BISHOP JEWELL'S *Apology*, xvii. 1.



parted from them in those particular points wherein they were fallen both from themselves in their ancient integrity, and from the Apostolical Churches which were their first founders."<sup>1</sup> And the Homily on the Sacrament says, "Before all other things this we must be sure of especially, that this Supper be in such wise done and ministered, as our Lord and Saviour did, and commanded to be done; as his holy Apostles used It, and the good Fathers of the Primitive Church frequented It."<sup>2</sup>

While the custom of Fasting Communion may thus be seen to have evidently so generally prevailed, it is equally clear that there was no rigid and invariable enforcement of it, when through sickness or other reasonable hindrance, fasting was impossible: when to attempt to abstain from all food would have been virtual excommunication. If the choice had to be made between not communicating at all, and occasional and exceptional receiving after food, the "ecclesiastical precept," as Mr. Blunt puts it, would give way to the "Divine obligation." An exception to the Catholic custom was thus recognised and permitted: in the Anglo-Saxon Church, "on account of extreme sickness;"<sup>3</sup> by the Council of Constance, "in case of infirmity or other necessity, on a right either granted or admitted by the Church;"<sup>4</sup> and by the Council of Mayence, "in cases of infirmity and necessity."<sup>5</sup> And

<sup>1</sup> Canon xxx.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Corrie's edition, p. 444.

<sup>3</sup> Above, p. 25.

<sup>4</sup> Above, p. 20.

<sup>5</sup> Above, p. 20.

provision was made by Archbishop Nicephorus for communicating "a sick person who is near death, although he be not fasting."<sup>1</sup> To the same effect Gratian,<sup>2</sup> S. Thomas,<sup>3</sup> and Van Espen.<sup>4</sup> But of evidence of systematic non-fasting or Evening Communion, there is no trace. And nothing short of absolute necessity, as Bishop Jeremy Taylor says,<sup>5</sup> could justify the violation of Church custom by those whose rule is, as expressed in innumerable authoritative documents, an appeal to Primitive and Catholic Antiquity. Where this necessity may exist, reverence would suggest that when complete abstinence is really impossible, the nearest practicable approach to it should be sought.

May we not with all confidence believe that included in the obligation which rests upon us to render to all their dues<sup>6</sup>—custom to whom custom—is the reverent practice of fasting reception of the Blessed Sacrament? May we not—with such abundant evidence as to Catholic usage, to which the Church of England at the Reformation so uniformly appealed as her standard in matters of doctrine, discipline, and ritual—entrench ourselves, as we deprecate the recent and modern, and therefore un-Catholic, innovation of late and non-fasting Communion, in the position once maintained by S. Paul—"If any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the Churches of God"? (1 Cor. xi. 16.)

The letter of S. Augustine to Januarius, from which

<sup>1</sup> Above, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Above, p. 26.

<sup>3</sup> Above, p. 27.

<sup>4</sup> Above, p. 52.

<sup>5</sup> Above, p. 31.

<sup>6</sup> Rom. xiii. 7.

quotation has been already made, is, throughout, full of interest in its bearing on our subject, and on matters closely connected with it; it is of great authority; and perhaps not easily accessible to many. In its completeness, moreover, it affords the truest insight into the mind of this eminent saint and doctor of the Church, and as to Catholic practice and feeling in the fourth and fifth centuries. It is therefore added intact:

*"To his beloved son Januarius, Augustine sends greeting in the Lord. (Letter liv.<sup>1</sup> A.D. 400.)*

"Chap. i. 1. In regard to the questions which you have asked me, I would have liked to have known what your own answers would have been; for thus I might have made my reply in fewer words, and might most easily confirm or correct your opinions, by approving or amending the answers which you had given. This I would have greatly preferred. But desiring to answer you at once, I think it better to write a long letter than incur loss of time. I desire you therefore, in the first place, to hold fast this as the fundamental principle in the present discussion, that our Lord Jesus Christ has appointed to us a 'light yoke' and an 'easy burden,' as He declares in the gospel,<sup>2</sup> in accordance with which He has bound His people under the new dispensation together in fellowship by sacraments, which are in number very few, in observance most easy, and in significance most excel-

<sup>1</sup> S. AUGUSTINE'S *Letters*. Edited by Clark. Vol. i. pp. 196-204.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. xi. 30.

lent, as Baptism solemnized in the Name of the Trinity, the Communion of His Body and Blood, and such other things as are prescribed in the canonical Scriptures, with the exception of those enactments which were a yoke of bondage to God's ancient people, suited to their state of heart and to the times of the prophets, and which are found in the five books of Moses. As to those other things which we hold on the authority, not of Scripture, but of tradition, and which are observed throughout the whole world, it may be understood that they are held as approved and instituted either by the apostles themselves, or by plenary Councils, whose authority in the Church is most useful, *e.g.* the annual commemoration, by special solemnities, of the Lord's Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension, and of the descent of the Holy Spirit from heaven, and whatever else is in like manner observed by the whole Church wherever it has been established.

"Chap. ii. 2. There are other things, however, which are different in different places and countries; *e.g.* some fast on Saturday, others do not; some partake daily of the Body and Blood of Christ; others receive It on stated days: in some places no day passes without the Sacrifice being offered; in others it is only on Saturday and the Lord's Day, or it may be only on the Lord's Day. In regard to these and all other variable observances which may be met anywhere, one is at liberty to comply with them or not as he chooses; and there is no better rule for the wise and serious Christian in this matter, than to conform to the practice which *he finds prevailing* in the Church to which it may be

his lot to come. For such a custom, if it is clearly not contrary to the faith nor to sound morality, is to be held as a thing indifferent, and ought to be observed for the sake of fellowship with those among whom we live.

“3. I think you may have heard me relate before, what I will nevertheless now mention. When my mother followed me to Milan, she found the Church there not fasting on Saturday. She began to be troubled, and to hesitate as to what she should do; upon which I, though not taking a personal interest then in such things, applied on her behalf to Ambrose, of most blessed memory, for his advice. He answered that he could not teach me anything but what he himself practised, because if he knew any better rule he would observe it himself. When I supposed that he intended, on the ground of his authority alone, and without supporting it by any argument, to recommend us to give up fasting on Saturday, he followed me, and said: ‘When I visit Rome, I fast on Saturday; when I am here, I do not fast. On the same principle, do you observe the custom prevailing in whatever Church you come to, if you desire neither to give offence by your conduct, nor to find cause of offence in another’s.’ When I reported this to my mother, she accepted it gladly; and for myself, after frequently reconsidering his decision, I have always esteemed it as if I had received it by an oracle from heaven. For often have I perceived, with extreme sorrow, many disquietudes caused to weak brethren by the contentious pertinacity or superstitious vacillation of some who, in matters of this kind, which do not admit of final decision by the

authority of Holy Scripture, or by the tradition of the Universal Church, or by their manifest good influence on manners, raise questions, it may be, from some crotchet of their own, or from attachment to the custom followed in one's own country, or from preference for that which one has seen abroad, supposing that wisdom is increased in proportion to the distance to which men travel from home, and agitate these questions with such keenness, that they think all is wrong except what they do themselves.

"Chap. iii. 4. Someone may say, 'The Eucharist ought not to be taken every day.' You ask, 'On what grounds?' He answers, 'Because, in order that a man may approach worthily to so great a Sacrament, he ought to choose those days upon which he lives in more special purity and self-restraint; for 'whosoever eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself.'" Another answers, 'Certainly; if the wound inflicted by sin and the violence of the soul's distemper be such that the use of these remedies must be put off for a time, every man in this case should be, by the authority of the bishop, forbidden to approach the altar, and appointed to do penance, and should be afterwards restored to privileges by the same authority; for this would be partaking unworthily, if one should partake of it at a time when he ought to be doing penance; and it is not a matter to be left to one's own judgment to withdraw himself from the communion of the Church, or restore himself, as he pleases. If, however, his sins are not so great as to bring him justly

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 29.

under sentence of excommunication, he ought not to withdraw himself from the daily use of the Lord's Body for the healing of his soul.' Perhaps a third party interposes with a more just decision of the question, reminding them that the principal thing is to remain united in the peace of Christ, and that each should be free to do what, according to his belief, he conscientiously regards as his duty. For neither of them lightly esteems the Body and Blood of the Lord; on the contrary, both are contending who shall most highly honour the Sacrament fraught with blessing. There was no controversy between those two mentioned in the gospel, Zacchæus and the Centurion; nor did either of them think himself better than the other, though, whereas the former received the Lord joyfully into his house,<sup>1</sup> the latter said, 'I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof,'—both honouring the Saviour, though in ways diverse and, as it were, mutually opposed; both miserable through sin, and both obtaining the mercy they required. We may further borrow an illustration here, from the fact that the manna given to the ancient people of God tasted in each man's mouth as he desired that it might.<sup>3</sup> It is the same with this world-subduing Sacrament in the

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke xix. 6.

<sup>2</sup> S. Matt. viii. 8.

<sup>3</sup> In his *Retractions*, b. ii. cxx., S. Augustine remarks on this statement, "I do not recollect any passage by which it could be substantiated, except from the book of Wisdom (xvi. 21), which the Jews do not admit to be of canonical authority." He says, in the same place, that this peculiarity of the manna must have been enjoyed only by the pious in Israel, not by the murmurers who said, "Our soul loatheth this light bread." (Numb. xxi. 5.)

heart of each Christian. For he that dares not take It every day, and he who dares not omit It any day, are both alike moved by a desire to do It honour. That sacred Food will not submit to be despised, as the manna could not be loathed with impunity. Hence the apostle says that It was unworthily partaken of by those who did not distinguish between this and all other meats, by yielding to It the special veneration which was due; for to the words quoted already, 'eateth and drinketh judgment to himself,' he has added these, 'not discerning the Lord's Body;' and this is apparent from the whole of that passage in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, if it be carefully studied.

"Chap. iv. 5. Suppose some foreigner visit a place in which during Lent it is customary to abstain from the use of the bath, and to continue fasting on Thursday. 'I will not fast to-day,' he says. The reason being asked, he says, 'Such is not the custom in my own country.' Is not he, by such conduct, attempting to assert the superiority of his custom over theirs? For he cannot quote a decisive passage on the subject from the Book of God; nor can he prove his opinion to be right by the unanimous voice of the Universal Church, wherever spread abroad; nor can he demonstrate that they act contrary to the faith, and he according to it, or that they are doing what is prejudicial to sound morality, and he is defending its interests. Those men injure their own tranquillity and peace by quarrelling on an unnecessary question. I would rather recommend that in matters of this kind, each man should, when sojourning in a country in which he finds a custom different



from his own, consent to do as others do. If, on the other hand, a Christian, when travelling abroad in some region where the people of God are more numerous, and more easily assembled together, and more zealous in religion, has seen, *e.g.* the Sacrifice twice offered, both morning and evening, on the Thursday of the last week in Lent, and therefore, on his coming back to his own country, where It is offered only at the close of the day, protests against this as wrong and unlawful, because he has himself seen another custom in another land, this would show a childish weakness of judgment against which we should guard ourselves, and which we must bear with in others, but correct in all who are under our influence.

“Chap. v. 6. Observe now to which of these three classes the first question in your letter is to be referred. You ask, ‘What ought to be done on the Thursday of the last week of Lent? Ought we to offer the Sacrifice in the morning, and again after supper, on account of the words in the gospel, “Likewise also . . . after supper”? Or ought we to fast and offer the Sacrifice only after supper? Or ought we to fast until the offering has been made, and then take supper as we are accustomed to do?’ I answer, therefore, that if the authority of Scripture has decided which of these methods is right, there is no room for doubting that we should do according to that which is written; and our discussion must be occupied with a question, not of duty, but of interpretation as to the meaning of the Divine Institution. In like manner, if the Universal Church follows any one of these methods, there is no room for doubt as to our duty; for it would

be the height of arrogant madness to discuss whether or not we should comply with it. But the question which you propose is not decided either by Scripture or by universal practice. It must, therefore, be referred to the third class—as pertaining, namely, to things which are different in different places and countries. Let every man, therefore, conform himself to the usage prevailing in the Church to which he may come. For none of these methods is contrary to the Christian faith or the interests of morality, as favoured by the adoption of one custom more than the other. If this were the case, that either the faith or sound morality were at stake, it would be necessary either to change what was done amiss, or to appoint the doing of what had been neglected. But mere change of custom, even though it may be of advantage in some respects, unsettles men by reason of the novelty; therefore, if it brings no advantage, it does much harm by unprofitably disturbing the Church.

“7. Let me add, that it would be a mistake to suppose that the custom prevalent in many places of offering the Sacrifice on that day after partaking of food, is to be traced to the words, ‘Likewise after supper,’ &c. For the Lord might give the name of supper to what they had received in already partaking of His Body, so that it was after this that they partook of the cup; as the apostle says in another place: ‘When ye come together into one place, this is not to *eat* the Lord’s Supper,’ giving to the receiving of the Eucharist to that extent (*i.e.* the eating of the Bread) the name of the Lord’s Supper.

“ Chap. vi. 8. As to the question whether upon that day it is right to partake of food before either offering or partaking of the Eucharist, these words in the gospel might go far to decide our minds, ‘ As they were eating, Jesus took bread and blessed it ;’ taken in connection with the words in the preceding context, ‘ When the even was come He sat down with the twelve : and as they did eat, He said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me.’ For it was after that that He instituted the Sacrament ; and it is clear that when the disciples first received the Body and Blood of the Lord they had not been fasting. Must we therefore censure the Universal Church because the Sacrament is everywhere partaken of by persons fasting? Nay, verily ; for from that time it pleased the Holy Spirit to appoint for the honour of so great a Sacrament, that the Body of the Lord should take the precedence of all other food entering the mouth of a Christian ; and it is for this reason that the custom referred to is universally observed. For the fact that the Lord instituted the Sacrament after other food had been partaken of does not prove that brethren should come together to partake of that Sacrament after having dined or supped, or imitate those whom the apostle reprovèd and corrected for not distinguishing between the Lord’s Supper and an ordinary meal. The Saviour indeed, in order to commend the depths of that Mystery more affectingly to His disciples, was pleased to impress It on their hearts and memories by making Its institution His last act before going from them to His Passion. And therefore He did not prescribe the order in which It

was to be observed, reserving this to be done by the apostles, through whom He intended to arrange all things pertaining to the churches. Had He appointed that the Sacrament should be always partaken of after other food, I believe that no one would have departed from that practice. But when the apostle, speaking of this Sacrament, says, 'Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another: and if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation,' he immediately adds, 'And the rest will I set in order when I come.' Whence we are given to understand that, since it was too much for him to prescribe completely in an epistle the method observed by the Universal Church throughout the world, it was one of the things set in order by him in person; for we find its observance uniform amid all the variety of other customs.

"Chap. vii. 9. There are, indeed, some to whom it has seemed right (and their view is not unreasonable) that it is lawful for the Body and Blood of the Lord to be offered and received after other food has been partaken of, on one fixed day of the year, the day on which the Lord instituted the Supper, in order to give special solemnity to the service on that anniversary. I think that, in this case, it would be more seemly to have it celebrated at such an hour as would leave it in the power of any who have fasted to attend the service before the repast which is customary at the ninth hour. Wherefore we neither compel, nor do we dare to forbid, any one to break his fast before the Lord's Supper on *that day*. I believe, however, that the real ground upon

which this custom rests is, that many, nay, almost all, are accustomed in most places to use the bath on that day. And because some continue to fast, It is offered in the morning, for those who take food, because they cannot bear fasting and the use of the bath at the same time; and in the evening, for those who have fasted all day.

“10. If you ask me whence originated the custom of using the bath on that day, nothing occurs to me, when I think of it, as more likely than it was to avoid the offence to decency which must have been given at the baptismal font, if the bodies of those to whom that rite was to be administered were not washed on some preceding day from the uncleanness consequent on their strict abstinence from ablutions during Lent; and that this particular day was chosen for the purpose because of its being the anniversary of the institution of the Supper. And this being granted to those who were about to receive Baptism, many others desired to join them in the luxury of a bath, and in relaxation of their fast.

“Having discussed these questions to the best of my ability, I exhort you to observe, in so far as you may be able, what I have laid down, as becomes a wise and peace-loving son of the Church. The remainder of your question I purpose, if the Lord will, to answer at another time.”

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“IN HONOREM HUIUS SACRAMENTI.”

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